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ASCS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service

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ASCS DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

The objective of the defense preparedness program in the United States Department of Agriculture is to maintain a state of readiness to carry out food and agricultural programs under wartime conditions. In this event USDA must be able to mobilize its forces rapidly, without substantial reorganization. It also must provide leadership and guidance to State and local governments, farmers, the food industry, and the public to insure conservation and continuity of the nation's food supply and the preservation of agricultural resources.

Defense responsibilities in USDA stem from program authorities and Executive orders delegating authority to the Secretary pursuant to statute. These responsibilities have been assigned by the Secretary to agencies whose regular activities bear a close relationship to programs that would be essential in a defense emergency. The Assistant to the Secretary, Intergovernmental Affairs coordinates defense preparedness in USDA. He is assisted at the national level by the USDA National Emergency Board composed of heads of agencies having defense responsibilities. The Administrator of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) is a member of this board.

Within ASCS, each Deputy Administrator supervises defense preparedness by the Divisions, staffs, and offices under his jurisdiction. For defense

purposes, ASCS commodity offices are considered components of USDA national headquarters. The unit in ASCS most prominently associated with defense is the Emergency Preparedness Division, which reports to the Deputy Administrator for Programs.

ASCS personnel are experienced in the administration of farm programs and programs to alleviate the effects of natural disasters. This experience would be valuable in defense emergency programs assigned to ASCS, including:

- (1) Production of crops, livestock and poultry.
- (2) Processing, storage, and distribution of feed and seed.
- (3) Mixing of fertilizers and domestic distribution of fertilizers and farm equipment.
- (4) Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) procurement of needed food and other agricultural commodities.
- (5) Storage and movement of all grain in raw form, including stocks owned or managed by CCC.
- (6) Estimating needs of farmers and the trades, servicing them for manpower, equipment, fertilizers, fuels, and other supplies and services.

ASCS is also responsible for providing USDA-wide coordinating services that include:

- (1) The consolidation of wartime claims for non-food requisites and manpower necessary to support food and agricultural operations, and other programs for which USDA is responsible.
- (2) Servicing USDA State and county emergency boards.
- (3) Coordination of resource data programs.

(4) Advising on maintenance of emergency records for State and county emergency boards and regional emergency staffs.

(5) Preparation of defense reports for USDA.

USDA defense preparedness programs are coordinated by its emergency boards covering each State, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and almost 3,000 counties. Members of these boards are representatives of USDA agencies having field defense responsibilities. The boards also estimate the amount of rural damage caused by major natural disasters, and coordinate USDA activities identified with these disasters affecting their geographic areas.

ASCS State Executive Directors represent ASCS on the USDA State emergency boards and serve as chairmen. They also supervise the defense preparedness measures taken by the USDA county boards. In most counties, the ASCS County Executive Director serves as the ASCS member of the county board and is responsible for defense preparedness concerning agricultural production and food management. County Executive Directors also usually serve as chairmen of the USDA county emergency boards.

In a defense emergency, if communications with higher USDA authority were cut off, both USDA State and county board chairmen would have authority to make necessary program decisions, within their area of jurisdiction, in accordance with established policies.

